

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5349
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 6661

E.O. 11652: YGDS-TAGS: PLO, MARR
SUBJECT: PNC CHAIRMAN FAHUM OUTLINES HIS VIEWS OF GENEVA MEPC

1. SUMMARY: PNC CHAIRMAN KHALED FAHUM CONTINUES TO OPPOSE
CONVENING OF GENEVA ON BASIS UNSC RES 242 AS IT NOW STANDS,
AND CLAIMS US-ISRAELI WORKING RPER SHOULD BE AMENDED TO
INDICATE THAT PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES WILL BE REPRESENTING
"THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE" AT GENEVA. FAHUM APPARENTLY DOES
NOT OBJECT IF THESE REPS COME FROM WEST BANK/GAZA AND ARE NOT
OFFICIALLY MEMBERS OF PLO IF THEY ARE DULY APPOINTED BY THAT
BODY. OTHERWISE, HE THREATENED THAT AN PALESTINIANS GOING
TO GENEVA WITHOUT BLESSING OF PLO WOULD BE ASSASSINATED.
FAHUM BELIEVES NEW UNSC RESOLUTION REFERRING TO LEGITIMATE
RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND/OR FORMATION OF GOVT-IN-
EXILE WOULD PERMIT PALESTINIANS TO OVERCOME CURRENT OBSTACLES
TO THEIR PRESENCE AT GENEVA. HE SAID SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT
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ARE PUSHING FOR FORMATION SUCH A "GOVT" WHILE SYRIAN CONTINUES
OPPOSED. SEVERAL NAMES HAVE BEEN FLOATED TO HEAD THIS GOVT.
IN EVENT GOVT FORMED, ARAFAT WISHES TO INSURE THAT ITS
HEAD WILL NOT ENJOY SUFFICIENT STATURE TO CHALLENGE HIM.
WE SKEPTICAL THAT PALESTINIANS NEAR TO FORMING GOVT-IN-
EXILE, BUT BELIEVE THERE SOME WILLINGNESS AMONG PLO PRAG-
MATISTS TO CONSIDER NON-PLO MEMBERS REPRESENTING PALESTINIANS

AT GENEVA. END SUMMARY.

2. REGULAR PALESTINIAN SOURCE TOLD POLOFF DETAILS OF CONVERSATION HE HELD OCTOBER 21 WITH PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN KHALED AL-FAHUM. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, FAHUM RAISED TWO PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS TO CURRENT PLANS TO RECONVENE GENEVA MEPC. HE PREDICTABLY OPPOSED RECONVENING CONFERENCE ON BASIS OF UNSC RES 242 AS IT CURRENTLY STANDS AND ALSO COMPLAINED THAT US-ISRAELI WORKING PAPER'S REFERENCE TO PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT THE CONFERENCE WAS INSUFFICIENT IN VIEW OF PLO CHARTER AND PNC'S FIFTEEN POINT POLITICAL DOCUMENT.

3. FAHUM SAID THAT WORKINGPAPER SHOULD MINIMALLY INDICATE THAT THESE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE "REPRESENTING THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE" AND NOT MERELY ATTENDING AS PALESTINIANS. FAHUM DID NOT SEEM TO INSIST THAT THE PLO BE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN THE WORKING PAPER, BUT HE AVERRED THAT ANY PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES WOULD HAVE TO BE AUTHORIZED BY THE PLO TO REPRESENT THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE OR FACE ASSASSINATION AS TRAITORS TO THEIR PEOPLE. FAHUM'S RATIONALE WAS THAT ALL LOYAL PALESTINIANS COME UNDER THE PLO'S AEGIS AS THE SOLE LEGITIMATE REP OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND THEREFORE ARE QUALIFIED TO ATTEND AS PLO REPS IF SO AUTHORIZED. NEVERTHELESS, FAHUM INDICATED THAT THE PLO, REGARDLESS OF THE ULTIMATE FORM OF ITS REPRESENTATION, STILL WISHED TO RECEIVE CONFIDENTIAL

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A SEPARATE INVITATION TO THE CONFERENCE.

4. FAHUM MAINTAINED HIS WELL-KNOWN POSITION THAT 242 IS UNACCEPTABLE AS BASIS FOR CONVENING GENEVA DESPITE EARLIER REPORTS (SEE DAMASCUS 2318) THAT AN INVITATION TO THE PLO WOULD IN AND OF ITSELF INDICATE THAT 242 IS NO LONGER OPERATIVE. HE SAW TWO POSSIBLE WAYS AROUND THIS "IMPASSE." HE BELIEVE NEW UNSC RESOLUTION MINIMALLY REFERRING TO THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS (FAHUM WAS NOT CLEAR AS TO WHETHER LEGITIMATE "NATIONAL" RIGHTS NECESSARY OR LEGITIMATE RIGHTS SUFFICIENT) WOULD ALLOW THE PALESTINIANS TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE. SECONDLY, FAHUM RAISED POSSIBILITY THAT A PALESTINIAN GOVT-IN-EXILE WOULD BE FORMED BY PALESTINIAN NATIONALISTS NOT BELONGING TO THE VARIOUS GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS. HE BELIEVED THAT SUCH A "GOVT" NEED NOT BE BOUND BY THE PLO'S CHARTER OR POLITICAL DOCUMENTS, THUS PERMITTING IT MORE FLEXIBILITY. SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT WERE PUSHING HARD FOR SUCH A MOVE, AND SAUDI ARABIA SAW IT AS MEANS FOR ELIMINATING LEFTIST/RADICAL INFLUENCE WITHIN THE MOVEMENT. SYRIA SEES THIS AS PLOY TO ELIMINATE SAIQA INFLUENCE AND OPPOSES THE CONCEPT. FAHUM SAID THE SOVIET UNION WOULD ALSO HAVE TO GIVT ITS ASSENT BEFORE "GOVT" COULD BE FORMED.

5. FAHUM SAID ARAFAT CHARY ABOUT FORMATION OF SUCH A BODY BECAUSE HE FEARS A STRONG PERSONALITY HEADING THE GOVT COULD UNDERCUT HIS LEADERSHIP. SEVERAL NAMES TO HEAD SUCH A GOVT HAVE BEEN INFORMALLY DISCUSSED AMONG PLO LEADERS INCLUDING LAWYER IBRAHIM AL-BAKR WHO WAS EXPELLED FROM WEST BANK (RAMALLAH) BY ISRAEL AND RUHI AL-KHATIB FORMER MAYOR OF JERUSALEM EXPELLED BY ISRAELIS.

6. FAHUM, WHO, ALONG WITH ARAFAT AND SOME EXCOMM MEMBERS, MET WITH PRES AL-ASSAD OCTOBER24, CLAIMED THAT PCC MEETING WOULD PROBABLY BE HELD IN DAMASCUS TOWARDS END OF THIS WEEK (OCTOBER 28-29). MAIN ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION, HE SAID, WOULD BE THE WORKING PAPER AND FORMATION OF GOVT-IN-EXILE. FAHUM
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CLAIMED THESE DELIBERATIONS WERE MOST DEMOCRATIC IN ARAB WORLD, AND HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT ATTITUDES WOULD EMERGE TOWARD FORMATION GOVT-IN-EXILE.

7. FAHUM SAID PLO/SYRIAN RELATIONS WERE AT A POINT WHERE THE TWO COULD BE HARACTERIZED AS ALLIED (MUTAHALLIFA). HE BELIEVED THAT THE PLO WOULD ULTIMATELY ACCED TO SYRIAN WISHES IN SOUTH LEBANON. CHARACTERISTICALLY, HE ASSERTED THAT THE PLO HAD TO RESUME ITS DIALOGUE WITH JORDAN IF IT WERE TO SUCCEED IN ITS AIMS.

8. COMMENT: GIVEN THE NUMBER OF TIMES GOVT-IN-EXILE CONCEPT HAS BEEN FLOATED AND REJECTED, WE SKEPTICAL THAT PLO WILL ULTIMATELY CHOOSE THIS AS VEHICLE TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES TO PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA, ALTHOUGH SYRIAN ACQUIESCENCE IN SUCH A MOVE (UNLIKELY) COULD SWING THE BALANCE TOWARDS THOSE FAVORING CONCEPT. ALTHOUGH FAHUM DENIES ANY AMBITIONS TO HEAD SUCH A BODY, IT POSSIBLE THAT HE BELIEVES TH MIGHT BE CHOSEN TO HEAD THIS "GOVT", THUS EXPLAINING HIS INTEREST. WE ALSO HEARD REPORT AT 0700 LT ON ISRAELI NEWS (ENGLISH SERVICE) OCT 25 THAT THE PLO IS SOUNDING OUT WEST BANKERS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR REPRESENTING PALESTINIANS AT GENEVA. FAHUM'S REMARKS INDICATE THAT, TO AT LEAST SOME PLO OFFICIALS, WEST BANK/GAZA REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE IF THEY DULY AUTHORIZED BY PLO TO ATTEND.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

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